

Rhyme and Rhyme Scheme

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

rhyme: word pair or set whose accented vowel sounds are identical

end rhyme: rhyme that occurs at the end of a line of poetry

rhyme scheme: a pattern of end rhyme in a poem

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Read the poem aloud. A poet often rhymes the last words of selected lines. If ending rhymes occur throughout the poem, look for a rhyme scheme.

Step 2: See what sound the first line ends with. Give that sound the letter *a*.

Step 3: Look at the second line. If it ends with the same sound as the first line, mark it with an *a* too. If it ends with a different sound, mark it with the letter *b*.

Step 4: Continue marking each line of the poem. If a line ends with a sound already marked, use that letter again. If it ends with a new sound, give it a new letter.

Step 5: Read the pattern of letters. The rhyme scheme for a poem is described by the pattern of letters, such as *asaabb*. Patterns may change or repeat.

EXAMPLE: RHYME SCHEME

Rain in Summer

- How beautiful is the rain! (a)
After the dust and heat, (b)
In the broad and fiery street, (b)
In the narrow lane, (a)
How beautiful is the rain! (a)
- How it clatters along the roofs, (c)
Like the tramp of hoofs! (c)
How it gushes and struggles out (d)
From the throat of the overflowing spout! (d)
- Across the windowpane (a)
It pours and pours; (e)
And swift and wide, (f)
With a muddy tide, (f)
Like a river down the gutter roars (e)
The rain, the welcome rain! (a)

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Marking a rhyme scheme:

The first line ends with *rain*. This sound is marked with *a*. Lines 2 and 3 end with *heat* and *street*. These rhymes are given the letter *b*. In line 4, *lane* rhymes with *rain*, so it gets *a*.

The rhyme scheme for the first stanza is **abbaa**.

The rhymes in stanza 2 are *roofs* and *hoofs* and *out* and *spout*. These sounds have not appeared before; so they are given the letters *c* and *d*.

This stanza's rhyme scheme is **ccdd**.

Stanza 3 introduces two new rhymes—*pours* and *roars* and *wide* and *tide*. But *windowpane* rhymes with *rain* and *lane* in the first stanza.

So the rhyme scheme for stanza 3 is **aeffea**.